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Dulles Details Secret 1945 Peace Talks With Nazis

BY M. S. HANDLER

Allen W. Dulles, former Director of Central Intelligence who was United States intelligence chief in Switzerland during World War II, has published the first of two articles containing heretofore secret details of his negotiations with Nazi generals that led to the surrender of almost a million German fighting men in Italy on May 2, 1945.

Mr. Dulles, as station chief of the Office of Strategic Services, took the responsibility and the initiative to respond to direct probes from Gen. Karl Frederick Wolff, commander of SS (Elite Guard) forces in Italy. Secrecy had to be maintained to permit the Allied Governments to disavow him if the negotiations backfired because the Nazis were laying a trap to divide the Soviet Union and its allies.

Mr. Dulles retired in 1961 as head of the CIA, successor organization to the OSS. One of his great wartime achievements was to negotiate the Germans out of the war in Italy. Details of the complicated and what must have been at times heartbreaking moves and countermoves have never been divulged.

The first of a two-part series entitled "This Secret Surrender" was published in the July issue of Harper's magazine. The series consists of excerpts from Mr. Dulles's book, also entitled "The Secret Surrender," to be published by Harper & Row in October.

Tracing the Origins

Mr. Dulles acknowledged in the first article, which bears the subtitle "Opening Intrigue with Hitler's Generals," the collaboration of Gero v. S. Gaevernitz in the writing. Mr. Gaevernitz, a naturalized American of German birth, had family business interests in Switzerland, where he became Mr. Dulles's personal collaborator and friend.

Tracing the beginnings of the from the end of February, 1945, emissaries and messages were passing secretly between the mission in Switzerland and German generals in Italy, but that early hopes of knocking the Nazis out of the war in Italy did not materialize because of the stubborn and insane policy of one man, Adolf Hitler."

The Wehrmacht generals, Mr. Dulles related, were reluctant to pull their armies out of the conflict for the following reasons: the Allied policy of unconditional surrender, timidly after the failure of the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler, Hitler's promise of miracle weapons that would save Germany, the myth that

Hitler would be able to divide the Allies, and, finally, the power of the personal oath taken to serve and obey Hitler.

Some Suggestions Raised

The probes started coming from the SS by the end of February, 1945. Mr. Dulles wrote.

American probes directed to the Wehrmacht proved fruitless, he said, and the early feelers from the SS made him suspicious. Finally, something happened on Feb. 28, 1945, at a meeting between Mr. Gaevernitz and Maj. Max Waibel of Swiss Military Intelligence.

Major Waibel had been reached by an Italian businessman, Baron Luigi Parilli, a name that meant little to Mr. Dulles, and by a Swiss, Prof. Max Husmann, who ran a private school not far from Lucerne. One of Baron Parilli's relatives had attended the school and this provided the link between the two men.

Mr. Dulles asked Mr. Gaevernitz to meet the Italian and the Swiss. Mr. Gaevernitz pressed the Italian hard and he finally asserted that the SS in Italy was somewhat different from what might be expected and that it was the SS and not the regular army that might be capable of independent thought and action. Thus the intrigue actually began.

Baron Parilli mentioned a close relationship with a young SS captain, Guido Zimmer, who had been chief of SS counter-espionage in Genoa.

Captain Zimmer, a devout Roman Catholic, wanted the war ended, according to Baron Farilli, who told the Americans that the captain had broached the subject to Colonel Eugen Dellmann, a high SS officer. He in turn brought into play his chief, General Wolff, the all-powerful SS commander.

Mr. Gaevernitz, moving cautiously, suggested to the Baron that a talk with Colonel Dellmann or General Wolff, or preferably with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the Wehrmacht commander in Italy, might be worth while.

To the surprise of Mr. Dulles, a call from Major Waibel a few days later informed him that Baron Parilli had returned to Switzerland with Colonel Dellmann and Captain Zimmer. The American decided to remain on the sidelines and designated

Paul Blum, of his Bern staff, to meet the Germans. Mr. Blum was an excellent judge of men, Mr. Dulles wrote, and it was important to find out whether the Germans were serious or were laying a trap.

Mr. Blum met the Germans and Baron Parilli in Lugano on March 3. Professor Husmann

was also present. Colonel Dollmann impressed Mr. Blum as a "slippery customer" who knew more than he was telling.

To test the Germans, Mr. Dulles requested through his representative that they surrender a partisan leader and an intelligence worker to the Americans. Four days later the American probe directed to the Swiss border, followed shortly afterward by General Wolff, Colonel Dollmann and Captain Zimmer.

General Wolff, who had been Himmler's liaison officer to Hitler before coming to Italy, was said to have been one of Hitler's favorites and was a man of considerable influence and power.

The Dulles-Wolff meeting took place in the American's library. General Wolff said that while he commanded all the SS forces in Italy, it would be necessary to win over the army commanders. He promised to do his best to arrange to have Marshal Kesselring or his deputy come to Switzerland.

Mr. Dulles informed Washington and Allied headquarters in Caserta, Italy.

Field Marshall Earl Alexander, Allied commander, replied that he would dispatch senior staff officers to Switzerland. Security preparations were made for the meeting, but something went wrong.

A Meeting at Ascona

On his return to Italy General Wolff received a message from Gen. Ernst Kaltenbrunner to meet him in Innsbruck, Austria. Kaltenbrunner, Himmler's assistant, had learned of General Wolff's visit to Switzerland. General Wolff resorted to a ruse to avoid the trip.

Meanwhile, Marshal Kesselring was transferred to the Western Front and replaced by

Col. Gen. Heinrich von Vietinghoff, a stiff Balt who was not likely to join in the negotiations.

At this point, Field Marshal Alexander's envoys, an American, Lyman L. Lemnitzer, then a major general, and Maj. Gen. Terence S. Airey, a Briton, arrived.

On March 17 a message was received that General Wolff would arrive at the Swiss border on the morning of the 19th. The meeting was planned for Ascona, on Lake Maggiore. The general appeared without Colonel Dollman, who remained behind to intercept any messages from Himmler or Kaltenbrunner.

General Wolff told Mr. Dulles in a preliminary talk that it would be difficult to win over General von Vietinghoff.

General Wolff dismissed Mussolini as a negligible factor in the situation.

In the afternoon, Mr. Dulles introduced Generals Lemnitzer and Airey. It was the first encounter of Allied officers with enemy officers on neutral soil to discuss a German surrender. General Lemnitzer said the Allies were interested only in unconditional surrender and suggested a meeting of high officers of both sides. The German suggested that his side send two officers, one representing the SS and the other the Wehrmacht.

Ten days later Captain Zimmer came over the border and reported that General Wolff had seen Marshal Kesselring and that the field marshal had agreed to support the Wolff plan. Marshal Kesselring told General Wolff to inform General von Vietinghoff. General Wolff reported that if all went well he hoped to bring the new commander or one of his staff officers over on April 2.